



Ron Edmore

1205 E Wright Road
Greenville, NC 27858
January 14, 2002

NORTH CAROLINA
CHAPTER

Regional
Groups

Blue Ridge
Boone

Cape Fear
Wilmington

Capital
Raleigh

Central Piedmont
Charlotte

Cypress
Greenville

Foothills
Ft. Wainwright

Haw River
Burlington

Headwaters
Durham

Medoc
Rocky Mount

Orange-Chatham
Chapel Hill

Piedmont Plateau
Greensboro

Pisgah
Errend

South Mountains
Asheville

WENOCA
Asheville

Mr. Bill Gilmore, PE Manager
NCDOT

Project Development & Environmental Analysis
1548 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1548

Dear Mr. Gilmore:

In April of 1998 the Cypress Group of the Sierra Club submitted seven pages of comments to NCDOT regarding the draft Environmental Analysis (EA) for the Havelock Bypass. Because of the seriousness of probable unmitigated adverse environmental impacts likely to occur to the Croatan National Forest (CNF) we advised NCDOT to do a full environmental impact statement.

Today, after field trips to the CNF and communications with the USFS regarding the Bypass, we are even more concerned. We would therefore greatly appreciate a letter from you addressing the following questions.

1. Is NCDOT willing to mitigate adverse impacts (to lands with unique ecological values and numerous USFS PETS and MIS species) by closing the Bypass as needed to allow prescribed burning of lands in close proximity to the Bypass? Included in this concern are lands that would be fragmented by the Bypass due to their location between the Bypass and the Town of Havelock. According to the Draft EA, NCDOT assumed the USFS would dispose of these lands thereby eliminating the need to provide for continued management. However, the USFS has assured us in recent correspondence that it is not their intent to dispose of these lands. The above question is important because, under the preferred alternative some 700 acres of these lands consist of good to high quality longleaf pine, and since longleaf pine savanna has been reduced to approximately 3% of its original size throughout the South it is therefore considered an endangered ecosystem. Also, because longleaf pine restoration is the cornerstone of the CNF's Draft Land Use Plan, disposal of lands conflicts with high priority CNF goals and objectives.
2. Have NCDOT engineers met, or do they plan to meet, in the field with USFS botanists/ecologists to select a roadway alignment that will miss the proposed Southwest Prong Flatwoods Natural area and other rare communities in USFS forest compartment 12? The USFS ecologist stated (See the USFS botanical analysis in Appendix A of the Draft EA.) that impacts to rare plants/communities in this compartment would be "major." He therefore recommended such a meeting to search for a way to protect a major population of spring-flowering goldenrod – in order to avoid loss of viability of this species on the CNF and throughout its range.

